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ABSTRACT

This evaluation of Vermont's 5-year LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) plan begins with an overall report of results in achieving goals and objectives. This section offers an overview of Vermont's geography, population, and history and use of library services. Results are then described for each of the plan's seven goals and related objectives. The next section presents an in-depth evaluation that focuses on two elements: the use of technology in local libraries to strengthen local library services infrastructure and access; and consulting and training for local libraries and librarians resulting in improved services. Lessons learned are summarized, and a brief review of the evaluation process is provided. (MES)

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Interdependence in Vermont

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An Evaluation of Vermont's Five-Year LSTA Plan

Submitted to the
Institute of Museum and Library Services

Prepared By:
The Vermont Department of Libraries

with assistance from
Library Development Solutions
Princeton, New Jersey
April 2002

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Executive Summary

Vermont's Five-Year LSTA Plan (1997-2002) and its revision (2000-2004) describe a methodical and purposeful roadmap to achieve shared library and information resources for the benefit of all 600,000 residents. The Vermont Department of Libraries (DOL) has successfully implemented and achieved most of its five year plan through a consistent focus of centrally guiding Vermont libraries "...**to provide adequate library materials and information services in all established formats to all Vermonters regardless of age, location, education, economic status or special need,**" as an overall goal.

Without LSTA support, Vermont libraries would be less able to provide relevant services to residents today, such as Internet access, efficient interlibrary loan and reference services, and access to library catalogs statewide. Comments from Vermont librarians indicate a connected and interdependent library community in Vermont. A renewal of vitality and relevance in Vermont libraries is critical to libraries remaining important social assets to their communities, especially in those library and school districts that rely on lower tax bases to support their libraries and schools and in remote rural areas, where new infrastructure demands can put stress on local budgets.

This report will explain that the amount of staff certification, continuing education, and technical training provided through the DOL with LSTA assistance is easily worth many hundreds of thousands of dollars to local budgets and is a **primary component** of all of DOL's programs.

The Vermont Department of Libraries provided LSTA grants to local libraries that enabled them to participate in resource sharing projects, from basic to more advanced technology planning and infrastructure assistance.

Some of the projects discussed in the following report include:

- The Vermont Automated Libraries System (VALS), Vermont's "Library Without Walls" that provides access to online library catalogs and electronic information databases as well as interlibrary loan access.
- Public librarian certification, training and continuing education development for library staff and trustees through workshops and classes.
- The very popular statewide summer reading program that continues to include more libraries and children every year.
- LSTA technology grants to libraries for basic hardware needs, Internet connections and beyond.

The Vermont Department of Libraries has achieved many of the goals in its Five-Year LSTA plan. In particular, Librarian Certification and Continuing Education, local

consulting services, public Internet access, the Summer Reading Program and VALS are successful examples for implementing sharing of library and information resources.

Who Benefits?

Though there are specific communities and populations of residents in Vermont that may benefit more from a particular program than others, it is the full population of Vermont that has improved and increased access to information and materials due to LSTA assisted projects. Specific populations that have benefited from LSTA assisted projects include:

- Local library staff and trustees who receive certification, skills training, technology training and guidance, and a network of involvement and interaction with other Vermont librarians;
- Residents whose libraries have access to the Internet, full text databases, and access to the collections of libraries throughout Vermont;
- Many retirees and seniors who rely on their library as a comfortable hub of their community, where they can learn to e-mail relatives, search the Internet and receive materials quickly from other libraries;
- Blind, visually impaired and physically disabled people who rely on Talking Books or Large Print books as their lifeline to the world;
- Over 14,000 children and their families who participate in the statewide summer reading program.

The following report will describe some of these programs and benefits.

Overall report of results in achieving goals and objectives based on the 5-year plan.

> *"It's amazing how much difference one trained, certified person can make – having a knowledgeable librarian makes a big difference."*
>
> Vermont public librarian interviewee

Vermont's geography, population and a brief review of its history and use of library services will provide an important backdrop to understanding the Five-Year Plan and the emphasis on specific goals and activities. Most of the information provided here is included in Vermont's Department of Libraries' Five-Year LSTA Plan.

"When I started, I did not know how to do many things – children's story time, collection development, etc...The DOL consultants and certifications are invaluable resources."

public librarian interviewee

Vermont is a predominately rural state (in fact, the U.S. Census Bureau ranks it as the nation's most rural state) with a population of just over 600,000 residents. However, with approximately 200 public libraries in Vermont, it has the highest per capita number of public libraries in the United States. It is important to note the population distribution in cities and towns in Vermont since of the 200 public libraries, 99% of them are "single direct service outlets" the highest percent of single governance, stand alone libraries of any state (the same as in Maine) in the country[1]. Additionally, 37% of all public libraries are Association Libraries (in Vermont these are know as Incorporated Libraries) and 56% are Municipal Libraries, and 6% are "Combined,"[2] a combination of school/public or academic/public library. There are no county, district or multi-jurisdictional libraries. Statutory authority for school libraries lies with the state Department of Education.

Additionally, Vermont's public libraries are distributed mostly in smaller cities and towns:

- 28% serve towns of less than 1,000 residents
- 39% serve towns between 1,000 to 2,500 residents
- 17% serve towns between 2,500 to 5,000 residents
- 11% serve towns between 5,000 to 10,000 residents
- Only 4% serve towns with over 10,000 residents

Almost 70% of public libraries in Vermont serve communities smaller than 2,500 residents. Considering this distribution of public libraries into small communities and the tradition of local governance of libraries, many of the 200 public libraries in these small communities, relying mostly on local funds, face great difficulty in providing adequate library services to their community in relation to the expectations of their residents. Many of these libraries operate with limited hours, staff and collections. At the same time, libraries are very popular with residents in Vermont and, regardless of size, experience a lot of visits. Vermont public libraries rank 4th in the United States in library visits per capita (5.69 vs. a national average of 4.26) following Connecticut, New York and Indiana.[3] Vermont public libraries also rank:

[1] Statistics in Brief, National Center for Education Statistics, Sept. 1998
[2] A distinct group of states offering Combined governance with Alaska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Vermont
[3] NCES-FSCS Public Library Survey 1999

- 25th in circulation transactions per capita;
- 30th in total income per capita;
- 47th in state income per capita;
- 35th in local income per capita; and
- 2nd in other income per capita

The stated overriding goal of statewide library service in Vermont is **to provide adequate library materials and information services in all established formats to all Vermonters regardless of age, location, education, economic status or special need.**

Vermont's Five-Year Plan emphasizes that "In 1990, Vermont became the first state library system to allow statewide direct public access to its online databases. Vermont's successful library and information sharing network depends on the good will, the cooperation, and the willingness of all types of libraries, large and small, to interact and share scarce resources. It is a unique and vital resource for Vermonters and has served as a national model."

The main priorities are stated as:

- To ensure that every Vermonter has equitable access to library materials and information regardless of the individual's location, economic status, educational level, age or special need.

- To direct major effort and emphasis to those library services and programs which can be provided most effectively and efficiently by a central agency.

- To strengthen and support local library services and professional library practices by training local librarians and trustees.

- To coordinate the Vermont Resource Sharing Network and the Vermont Automated Libraries System (VALS).

Goal 1:
Expand and improve library services by developing and implementing integrated systems that are interoperable both with VALS and other established electronic networks.

Objective 1.1:
Ensure that the Vermont Automated Libraries System (VALS) continues to be maintained as a linked statewide electronic network incorporating all types of libraries.

Objective 1.2:
Increase the number of libraries connected to VALS above the present 360 libraries by 3% each year through FY 2002.

Objective 1.3:
Ensure that the planning, development, and implementation of local integrated library systems funded or subsidized by state and federal funding have interoperability with the existing statewide VALS network.

Objective 1.4:
Empower the Statewide Technical Advisory Committee for VALS to evaluate the policies and protocols for linking to and participating in VALS.

Objective 1.5:
Insure that DOLSYS hardware and software capability is maintained at a level equal to or above that of the other major VALS partner sites.

Results:

The Vermont Automated Libraries System (VALS) serves as the hub of resource sharing for all libraries in Vermont, including public, school, academic and special libraries. VALS was founded in 1986 by the DOL, University of Vermont, Middlebury College and the Vermont State Colleges. Most of Vermont's academic libraries are full partners today. Access to over 5,000,000 items is available to all Vermont residents.

VALS is an online extension of the pre-existing "Vermont Union Catalog" (VUC) founded as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project in the 1930's. The VUC provides holdings/location information for items in Vermont libraries of all types. With the advent of VALS, DOL made the transition to online union catalogs for public library holdings (PUBcat) and for school library holdings (K12cat). Libraries that contribute their holdings to either the online union catalogs or the original manual union catalog (which is still maintained on a limited basis) are eligible for VALS participation. Approximately 140 public libraries are regular VALS users, contributing their records for the catalog.

Almost every public library in the state now has at least one dial-access connection to VALS at no cost to the library. At least 150 of the public libraries rely on dial access and another 25 have implemented in house automation systems and access VALS through their system and/or high-speed access. Libraries can access catalogs either through telnet or a GUI interface.

DOL also provides access to the internet and selected full-text commercial databases through VALS.

The following table highlights the success that VALS has accomplished since LSTA funding supported the project:

Vermont Automated Libraries System Usage[4]				
	FY 97	FY98	FY99	FY00
Libraries participating (all types)	385	377	366	360
Hours online for participating libraries (excludes DOL, DOL staff & WWW access)	36,344	37,371	39,068	40,901

Libraries, especially school libraries, may find difficulty in full participation in VALS at times, since eligibility in any given school year is determined by contributions of holdings made to the VUC in the *prior* school year. Turnover in school library personnel, lack of a certified school librarian, lack of local technical expertise, and frequent changes in school building internet access methods also makes continuity of participation by schools inconsistent. At one time or another just over 200 school libraries have applied for VALS accounts. In the 2001-2002 school year, 126 school libraries actively used VALS.

Participation in VALS by many smaller libraries of all types may require technical assistance from the DOL, and due to limitations on funding, the goal of all libraries participating in VALS is still in the near future. Maintaining and increasing the number of libraries participating requires a broader study of some of the barriers to participation and a plan to encourage and/or increase support to those libraries that fail to be involved. However, even as fewer libraries participate fully in VALS user hours increased significantly.

Future needs will include the expanded ability to provide technical expertise and funding to enable additional small rural libraries a participating role.

Goal 2:
Maintain and improve resource sharing and cooperative efforts to provide Vermonters, no mater how isolated, have access to library materials, government information, links to government services, and information designed to address their individual needs.

Objective 2.1:
Ensure the efficient flow of information to all Vermonters by facilitating through DOL and VALS the ongoing transfer of interlibrary loan requests, materials and information between libraries.

Objective 2.2:
Ensure the efficient flow of information between libraries primarily through the linked statewide network.

[4] Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Libraries Budget - Strategic Overview

Objective 2.3:
Provide access to the state's major library collections to ensure timely response to requests from small rural libraries.

Objective 2.4:
Develop and maintain links with and access to national networks, agencies and organizations through VALS to further the availability of information that is beyond the capacity of local libraries to afford individually.

Objective 2.5:
Maintain access to state government information through VALS as new state and local government databases are made available to the public.

Objective 2.6
Encourage planning for cooperative technology and telecommunications links between local schools, towns and municipalities, and other local community organizations and public libraries.

Results:

Interlibrary loan in Vermont is facilitated through the Department of Libraries and the Vermont Automated Libraries System. According to DOL staff and public library staff, the local libraries have become very proficient at receiving and processing ILL requests and information. According to one local head librarian, the training that she received as part of Certification included how to use interlibrary loan. She states that some staff in smaller public libraries may be intimidated by the interlibrary loan process, but the workshop and training they received has helped them develop their confidence and not shy away from promising materials to residents by using the ILL process.

Interlibrary loan requests are made primarily through e-mail and the majority of requests are handled through VALS. Local libraries can automatically format e-mail ILL requests with information from the online union catalogs using VALS and then forward the request to an owning library. Requests are made directly between requesting and owning library via VALS. Libraries without access to VALS use the U.S. mail to send ILL requests to one of the two DOL regional libraries where the request is then processed using VALS. A Department of Libraries / University of Vermont (UVM) Access Office, staffed by a DOL employee at the University, provides an additional source of reference information and interlibrary loan requests from the University of Vermont's Bailey /Howe Library. Considered a "last resort," the Office has provided a busy gatekeeper function to facilitate the use of the University collection and materials for all types of libraries throughout the state. According to one of the staff members involved with the Access Office,

> *"People at the University and those requesting information or materials feel very positive about the cooperation. Both 'sides' feel served"*

DOL's Reference and Interlibrary Loan Services staff and the DOL/UVM Access Office remove a burden from the regular ILL process for local libraries by untangling at times incomplete requests or complex reference citations. Such requests are forwarded to the Reference and Interlibrary Loan staff using e-mail. The approach of using at least three levels for ILL and reference requests has benefited libraries in Vermont as their comments and satisfaction with the reference and ILL process is high. One local public librarian commented that since she attended a workshop on ILL procedures and received a visit from Marianne Kotch, the Director of Public Library Support Services, that their interlibrary loan items received increased to over 700 items last year, a large increase from the previous year. The turnover in trained library staff can become a factor in reduced ILL requests made.

The following table describes the requests for information and materials that were handled by the DOL during the past four years.

Reference and ILL Requests by Year handled by the DOL[5]				
	1997	1998	1999	2000
Specific requests for information including for books, periodicals, topical research requests	89,119	86,425	84,534	84,479
Average per day	356	346	338	338

The decline in use is attributed to the reduced need for direct DOL intervention in the ILL process as well at to the closing of three DOL regional library facilities between 1997 and 2000. Using VALS, libraries may request exchange interlibrary loan requests without DOL staff intervention. VALS does not have the capability at this time of tracking such requests between libraries, but in 1999-2000, public libraries reported receiving nearly 39,000 items on interlibrary loan. Vermont has consistently ranked in the top 10 nationally for interlibrary loans received per 1,000 population.[6]

Goal 3:
Improve the quality and accessibility of library and information resources to all Vermonters by making available to local libraries support services, technical assistance, training, and other programs appropriate for libraries in Vermont's rural environment.

Objective 3.1:
Assist local libraries in making available information through the use of new technologies appropriate to the library's needs and resources.

Objective 3.2:
Provide ongoing training opportunities to enhance the skills of local librarians in using the most current technologies and methods of accessing information.

[5] Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Libraries Budget - Strategic Overview
[6] NCES-FSCS Public Library Survey 1999

Objective 3.3:
Offer local libraries in Vermont assistance in providing public access to resources and information using technology.

Results:

See "In Depth" section

Goal 4:
Promote resource sharing and cooperative access to library services and information regardless of location or format including the effective use of new technologies as they become available.

Objective 4.1:
Ensure the efficient flow of information to all Vermonters by facilitating through DOL the ongoing transfer of requests and materials between all types of libraries.

Objective 4.2:
Stimulate public library development by encouraging cooperative projects between libraries and social agencies and other related organizations.

Objective 4.3:
Stimulate library development by encouraging cooperative projects between libraries of all types in a county, region, school district or other geographic area.

Objective 4.4:
Ensure quality delivery of public library service to all segments in communities which have joint school-public (community) libraries.

Results:

Requests for transfers of materials are primarily accomplished through DOL's Vermont Automated Libraries System. There are three primary ways in which libraries can seek location information and request an interlibrary loan. The Vermont Union Catalog (VUC) is maintained by the Department of Libraries' Reference and Law Division. As previously mentioned, the VUC consists of online union catalogs in the Vermont Automated Libraries System and a VUC manual catalog that is checked by LSTA-supported staff in Reference and Law. Participating libraries are required to contribute holdings to VALS or VUC and be willing to lend their materials as well as borrow.

There are currently 12 community (combined public/school) libraries that operate in mostly smaller rural areas. The DOL carefully reviews their progress to learn any lessons about the adaptability of combined libraries in other parts of the state. Though combined libraries are not a preference in that they combine institutions with unique and different missions, they can provide examples of resource sharing partnerships that may benefit

other smaller rural communities. The incentive for school/library cooperation and collaboration is a strong one today, as many communities face tight budgets and taxpayer resistance to infrastructure improvements. Adopting certain elements of combined libraries may be a way for some communities to bridge the gap in the digital divide to provide electronic access to information sources to all their residents.

DOL consultants have made a concerted effort to encourage cooperation among public libraries on a regional or county-wide basis. Currently nine such informal groups meet regularly to plan joint programs, solve common problems, and share materials and services. A DOL consultant usually attends meetings to act as a facilitator and resource person.

Libraries in Chittenden County, Vermont have established a formal, county-wide library card system to benefit residents of the county. Though this is a nontraditional approach in Vermont, it also can provide a glimpse at a future of resource sharing that removes barriers to free public access to materials and resources. The DOL should review this development and gauge resident satisfaction regularly to determine the benefits.

One of the best current examples of library/school collaboration is the very popular and successful Summer Reading Program. In using a different theme each year, the participating libraries create a sense of excitement and vitality in using the library. During and after the programs, librarians are commenting that additional books are being circulated by the same children and families involved in the reading program. The following table highlights the participation in the Summer Reading Program during the past four years.

Vermont Summer Reading Program[7]				
	1997	1998	1999	2000
Children participating	13,218	12,290	12,686	13,945
Public libraries participating	144	150	145	141

The challenge over the next five years will be to create a renewed excitement about the Summer Reading Program and enlist additional public libraries and, perhaps, school libraries (if they remain open over the summer) to participate.

See "in-Depth" section for additional comments.

Goal 5:
Ensure that every Vermonter has local access to library materials and information regardless of location, age, education, economic status or special need.

[7] Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Libraries Budget - Strategic Overview

Objective 5.1:
Assist local libraries in acquiring computer hardware and software necessary to connect to VALS.

Objective 5.2:
Assist large libraries or library consortia with advanced technology and telecommunications needs.

Objective 5.3
Assist public libraries and trustees in planning for, implementing, and the use of new technologies appropriate to their local needs and resources.

Objective 5.4:
Maintain electronic databases that include the holdings of public libraries and school libraries.

Objective 5.5:
Find alternatives to assist libraries in funding the costs of technology and online access.

Results:

Three hundred and fifty of the state's 600+ libraries are connected to VALS. Every public library that meets the requirements of VALS participation is provided at least one dial access connection to VALS through the state telecommunication network, GOVnet, at no cost to the library, subsidized by the DOL with federal and state funds. School libraries fund their own connections to VALS. Fifty to sixty public libraries remain unconnected to VALS, for various reasons, including some that do not have telephone service.

PUBcat and K12cat are the public library and school library online union catalogs in Vermont which are maintained by the Department of Libraries on DOLSYS/VALS to enable public libraries and schools to share resources by using consistent formats and standards of cataloging, as well as enabling them to locate materials in libraries throughout the state.

DOL has also offered limited access to commercial full-text periodical databases through VALS to all types of libraries.

See more in the "In Depth" section.

Goal 6:
Make available to local public libraries in underserved areas the appropriate services, technical assistance, resources and programs to enhance the delivery of library services in Vermont's predominately rural environment.

Strive to meet a wide range of library and information needs for Vermonters with special needs including those with physical and visual disabilities or housed in state supported institutions.

Objective 6.1:
Provide ongoing training in basic library skills and professional library practices to local librarians.

Objective 6.2:
Continue and improve a certification program for public librarians.

Objective 6.3:
Stimulate local public library development and professional library practices by promoting long range planning, self evaluation, use of the long range planning program "Envisioning Excellence," and meeting the Minimum Standards for Vermont public libraries.

Objective 6.4:
Offer public libraries in Vermont technical assistance and professional consulting in all areas of public library services.

Objective 6.5:
Work with public librarians, trustees and related organizations to improve accessibility to library services for all ages in Vermont public libraries.

Objective 6.6:
Promote library services to children in Vermont.

Objective 6.7:
Make available supplementary resource materials and collections along with technical assistance to public libraries on a regional basis.

Objective 6.8:
Make available computerized cataloging records and/or catalog card sets at no cost for all eligible public libraries.

Objective 6.9:
Encourage and assist public libraries to plan and implement special outreach services and public relations efforts to reach disadvantaged and homeless Vermonters.

Objective 6.10:
Ensure that all public buildings are physically and attitudinally barrier-free to people who are disadvantaged or with disabilities.

Objective 6.11:
Provide library materials to meet the special informational needs of people who are certified legally blind or who have physical disabilities including residents of nursing and retirement homes.

Objective 6.12:
Provide for access to materials and resources to meet the library and information needs of residents of correctional, health and mental health care and other state operated facilities.

Objective 6.13:
Provide training and technical assistance to library personnel working with the legally blind, those who have visual and physical disabilities, and immobile elderly, and residents of state supported institutions.

Results:

See "In Depth" section for comments about ongoing training in basic library skills and professional library practices, the Certification program and meeting Minimum Standards for Public Libraries.

Statewide workshops to address populations that require literacy services have been included in the course curriculum for continuing education and the certification program. The Born to Read Program (sponsored by the Vermont Business Roundtable) is targeted to parents of infants and toddlers and brings the family into the local public library to receive a free book through the DOL and to register for a library card. Half-day workshops have been offered by Statewide Library Development Division to help local public librarians assist the families in the program. The Vermont Center for the Book and Vermont's DOL and DOE developed the Beginning with Mother Goose program that has become a model nationally for literacy projects for children at risk. The DOL encourages local public libraries to support the program where it is active in their community.

DOL library consultants include an ADA review with local public libraries when they visit and tour the facilities.

> *"The staff is great. I get my Talking Books the next day. I never wait. The service is personal. But I think you need to make physicians, the VA and senior organizations aware of the great resource."*
>
> Vermont LBPH user phone interviewee

The Department of Libraries Special Services Unit is Vermont's Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Approximately 27% of the Special Services Unit operating budget is LSTA supported as well as 86% of staffing or 4 positions. Vermont currently has the smallest collection and population among the 58 regional libraries in the country. According to an NLS consultant's report of January 2001, the Special Services

Unit does not meet staffing requirements according to NLS Standards and Guidelines of Service. To meet NLS Standards, two positions need to be added to the staff.

Similar to other Regional LBPH offices, the Vermont SSU has experienced a decline in the number of participants receiving materials and in the number of materials circulated. The number of deposit collections loaned to institutions has also declined in the past 4 years. Circulation has declined from a high of over 76,000 items in 1998 to less than 74,000 items in 2001. The Division Director and the Special Services Consultant estimate the number of active users at 1,500 and including occasional users at a total of 2,000 individuals. According to the NLS estimate cited by Frank Woods, the Special Services Consultant in Vermont, 1.5% of the national population is eligible for LBPH services; he believes that the number of potential users in Vermont would be at least 9,000 individuals. Staff was concerned about the people they are not reaching and expect to be involved in additional outreach efforts over the next few years.

Increased outreach is important as well as additional publicity about the LBPH services. A Special Services or Talking Book newsletter and a brochure should be revived after a few years of absence. A link to Special Services, and its own page, on the DOL website would also be beneficial to an outreach campaign as well as helpful to users. The DOL should also investigate the potential for merging with another Regional LBPH to leverage services for both geographical areas. The Special Services Unit has been addressing these issues throughout the past year and includes many of the same recommendations in their FY 2003 Budget.

> *"The Descriptive Videos are great. I hope they increase the selection. Also the catalog comes in Large Print and cassette tape; I hope they figure out a way to reduce the length of the descriptions."*
>
> Vermont LBPH user phone interviewee

Goal 7:
Coordinate and facilitate the planning, administration and evaluation of the Library Services and Technology Act Grants to States Program in Vermont.

Objective 7.1:
Coordinate the planning, monitoring and evaluation for LSTA or other federal library funding on an annual basis.

Objective 7.2:
Administer the state plan and its objectives.

Objective 7.3:
Develop and implement evaluation tools which measure the program's effectiveness.

Objective 7.4:
Collect and disseminate information about federal library programs/services statewide to the library community and general public.

Results:

The Vermont Department of Libraries has successfully planned, administered and evaluated key projects supported by LSTA funds during the past five years. The attention to detail of statistical reports and annual reports to the IMLS are clear and direct in their review. Requirements to participate in LSTA supported projects are clearly described to libraries in Vermont especially regarding Minimum Standards and Certification processes. Comments from public library staff to the evaluator indicated that they were pleased with the progress that Vermont libraries have accomplished with LSTA assistance and that the focus and direction by the Vermont Department of Libraries was on target with the needs of their communities.

The Vermont DOL should consider using the IMLS logo on materials that are supported by LSTA funds to display federal funding for a project. The DOL should also consider a yearly handout or brochure that explains to the library community and local governments the role that LSTA federal funds play in supporting the goals of adequate, equitable library service and information for all Vermont residents.

In Depth Evaluation

Vermont's evaluation of the Five-Year Plan includes an in-depth focus on the following two elements:

- Use of technology in local libraries to strengthen local library services, infrastructure and access.
- Consulting and training for local libraries and librarians resulting in improved services.

Technology In Local Libraries

The Vermont Department of Libraries has used a tiered approach to LSTA-funded technology grants to libraries. The DOL has offered three types of grants to accommodate libraries in various stages of public access to electronic information. The obvious need recognized in the mid 1980's was to have all 200 public libraries capable of sharing information and collections through electronic or digital means. This required libraries to invest in equipment, software, telecommunications, training and space for equipment in their small, modestly funded local public libraries. The successes of the Vermont Union Catalog and the Vermont Automated Libraries System, combined with the rising expectations of Vermont residents that they can retrieve both print and digital information through their local public library, provided the rationale for the grants. The grants are:

- Public Access Computer Grant for Public Libraries
- Internet Connectivity Grant for Public Libraries
- Advanced Technology Grant for Public Libraries

Public Access Computer Grant for Public Libraries
The DOL, in collaboration with IBM, devised the IBM/LSTA grants for libraries for computer workstations for public access to VALS, the Internet and other resources. Libraries that meet the Minimum Standards for Public Libraries in Vermont are eligible to apply. These grants are intended to meet the primary need for PCs in the library. According to a press release from IBM and the DOL date November 14, 2000:

> *"The US Department of Commerce estimated in its recently released report, **Falling through the Net**, that just under 50% of Vermont households had access to the Internet. Vermonters without access at home or who need additional help with the Internet, now have access at more than 70% of Vermont's public libraries thanks to the ongoing efforts of this joint program. IBM provided ten workstations. The department of Libraries funded an additional 20 through the LSTA. The total value of hardware and software funded in the 2000 grant round is $32,000. Since the program began in 1996, IBM has provided 43 computer workstations and software valued at $87,000 and the Department of Libraries with LSTA funds has provided 37 with a value of $77,000."*

By the end of 2000, Vermont public libraries offered 347 PCs for public use and 146 Internet connected PCs, more than double since 1997.

Internet Connectivity Grant for Public Libraries
The second grant program is to assist libraries with the cost of high-speed connectivity. E-rate discounts are factored into the grant as well as a commitment from the library that they will assume 50% of the cost in the second year, 75% of the cost in the third year and the full cost of the connection after that. Applicants are required to apply for and meet e-rate specifications and maintain at least 2 PCs, software, networking components and public Internet access during all open hours to qualify for the grant. Minimum bandwidth requirements are determine through a matrix of PCs, hours open, OPAC connections and other variables. To date, nine libraries have received 3-year grants.

A comment from one Vermont librarian about the addition of the Internet Connectivity and Advanced Technology grant:

> *"In the past a lot of grants went to just providing PCs to libraries – then the focus shifted to access (telecommunications) at higher speeds and targeted those libraries that needed improvement."*

Advanced Technology Grant for Public Libraries
Advanced Technology Grants are designed for public libraries to assist in achieving major upgrades to their integrated automation systems. Requirements include a large-scale (20 or more simultaneous users) integrated library automation system seeking to improve public services. Improvements must include providing an Internet accessible OPAC, and access through Z39.50 client/server systems. The grant is one time and can be up to $50,000. A one to one local match of funds is required for consideration.

The Rutland Free Library was a recipient of this grant in 2001. They replaced an 11-year-old MultiLis automation system with SIRSI and the iBistro interface in August 2001. Three additional PCs were added to the 16 purchased through the grant and all have become Internet accessible and able to use the web based OPAC. The response from the community "…has been fantastic."

> *"The web based catalog has helped patrons and staff shift to new services of a modern library and expect additional changes from the traditional ways of doing things."*
>
> Rutland Free Library

Consulting and Training

> *"The workshops have tremendous value for us. We really appreciate the high level of instructors and instruction. It helps us do everything better."*
>
> Interviewed Public librarian

Over 80% of the public librarians in Vermont are part time employees and have no formal library training. This includes many head librarians (i.e. library directors) who may have been appointed to their positions prior to certification or any formal library training. However, one of the requirements of the Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries is that the head librarian must possess "either a library science degree, a Vermont certificate of library training or has actively worked towards one of theses in the past 12 months." An unintended consequence of the local hiring process is that the turnover rate for head librarians and library staff is especially high in Vermont libraries (DOL estimates this to be about 33% every 2 years). First time head librarians in one of Vermont's many small rural libraries can encounter a degree of complexity in operating the library that at times may be overwhelming. Local library boards can at times underestimate the amount of labor and skill required to operate a small library, in which most tasks are hands on by the head librarian.

In order to meet the goal of providing adequate library materials and information services to all Vermonters, the DOL continually addresses the challenge of educating and retaining library staff as well as trustees and volunteers. The Statewide Library Development – Public Librarian Certification Program has been a success story for over 25 years and provides a model of commitment and professional development for other states, rural or not. Statewide Library Development and Regional Library Services provide the staff and initiative to work with local libraries and help develop those local

staff to meet their community's library and information needs. Twenty nine percent of Regional Library Services' operating budget is LSTA supported as well as 5 of the 9 Regional Library staff. Sixteen percent of Statewide Library Development's budget is LSTA supported.

The following statistics are quite amazing in describing the consistent approach to library staff training and the commitment by the DOL to assist libraries in meeting the Minimum Standards and the value added commitment to each library staff member to develop his/her personal skills.

Public Libraries- Total Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff - 2001[8]	
MLS Librarians	40.7
Total Librarians	163.12
Other Paid Employees	120.25
Total Paid FTE Employees	283.12

DOL's library consultants also receive and respond to almost 3,000 requests each year from libraries for consulting and technical assistance. And then consider the following level of participation by the library staff in the workshops and training sessions:

Workshops Offered And Staff Participation from all Types of Libraries[9]					
	1997	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**Totals**
# of workshops	86	88	84	111	369
# attendees	1,423	1,424	1,107	1,076	5,030

The certification requirement is 150 credits to earn a "Certificate of Public Librarianship" in Vermont. The 150 credits are achieved by taking courses offered by the DOL or through approved courses relating to public library service offered through other organizations. Independent study and internship credits can also be used. Certification is voluntary, not part of state law but expected for head librarians to meet the Minimum standards. MLS librarians are encouraged to attend workshops though they are not required to earn certification. Most of the workshops are held at regional or public libraries.

There are four required courses for certification:

- Cataloging and Organization of Library Materials
- Reference
- Public Library Administration
- Collection Development

[8] Vermont Public Library Statistics – 2001 Biennial Report Supplement
[9] Fiscal Year 2002 Department of Libraries Budget - Strategic Overview

Some of the workshops held in 2001 included:

- Wild about Reading –Summer Reading Program
- Public relations
- Reference
- Legal reference
- Understanding MARC
- Basic Public Library Administration
- Children's Library Policies
- Picture Book Story Hours
- Filing without Tears
- Programming for School Age Kids
- Implementing Authority Control – offered online

A fifth requirement includes basic computer literacy training, half of which must be related to Internet and/or VALS' usage. In addition to the formal workshops required for certification and continuing education are a group of "on- demand" mini workshops designed to address smaller groups, immediate needs and less time commitment. Regional librarians use these opportunities to customize a subject in order to address skills or processes that a local library staff needs quickly. These have included topics such as:

- Introduction to VALS
- Web 2: DOL'S New Web Based Catalogs
- How to Write an Effective Annual Report
- When Customer Service Gets Tough
- Safety
- Budgeting
- Intellectual Freedom
- Volunteers
- The Reference Interview
- InfoTrac/FirstSearch
- Statistics
- Planning
- Trustee Orientation

DOL has also developed one online course – Authority Control.

A Certification Board meets at least once a year to review the eligibility of candidates for certification. Candidates who have completed all their requirements by May 1 are awarded a Certificate of Public Librarianship at that year's Vermont Library Conference. Fourteen librarians will receive their certification in May 2002. A time span of five years from beginning to finish is allowed for completion of the certification process, though participants are encouraged to finish sooner if the courses they need are available.

Comments from candidates in the certification program, interviewed for the LSTA evaluation suggested that the four required courses should be offered more frequently.

The Vermont Libraries Trustees Association and the Department of Libraries are also involved each year in the Town Officers Educational Conferences, held in the spring in 5 locations throughout the state, and which offer workshops to public library trustees from around the state. The Conference provides library trustees with an opportunity to discuss issues and review information from the DOL about library and information services in their communities. The library trustee workshops for the 2002 conference include:

- Successful Public Library Board Meetings
- Working with a Library Long Range Plan
- Preparing Your Library for Disaster and Crises
- Library Success Stories

The successes that have been mentioned in the statewide summer reading program, interlibrary loan, automation projects and VALS usage attest to the strength and continued need for the Certification Program and the wide selection of workshops and mini workshops, as well as one-on-one consulting and advising that the DOL continues to provide. In 2002, 128 libraries, a record number of the 200 public libraries, met the requirements for Minimum Standards. Certification, training and continuing education have a direct bearing on successfully meeting standards as these libraries work to fill the information needs of their communities. Another impact that certification and training have is on library programming and attendance. In 2000, 11,413 programs were offered through Vermont public libraries and 182,646 people attended the programs. This was an 11% increase in programs offered and a 5% increase in attendance over 1999.

Comments from interviews with Vermont librarians about certification, continuing education and consulting programs include the following:

- Staff needs more training, especially beyond the certification process.
- Five years is too long for certification. Offer the required courses more often and at different times of the day. Five-day courses are difficult to attend – try to shorten them for smaller libraries.
- Try to offer more courses on line so we can do them from home or at the library. Use a combination of classroom and online workshops to allow greater flexibility.
- Try self-paced on line workshops (with a deadline for completion)
- The PC and technical workshops are excellent. We need more.
- Workshops have become less accessible for MLS librarians since so many others are taking the certification. How do we balance the need between certification and continuing education?

Lessons Learned

The Vermont Department of Libraries' Five-Year LSTA Plan draws a roadmap for "... providing adequate library materials and information services in all established formats to all Vermonters regardless of age, location, education, economic status or special need." Due to the rural demographics of the population of Vermont, State Librarian Sybil McShane and other library leaders have targeted funding to meet the library and information needs of the majority of residents through resource sharing programs, linkages between libraries, technology improvements and a consistent Certification and training program for librarians and staff. Vermonters are very attached to local control of local institutions, accounting in part, for the existence of almost 200 local public libraries to serve a population of 600,000.

The feedback from in person and telephone interviews indicates a high degree of satisfaction and cooperation with the current focus and programs in the DOL Five-Year Plan. Even given the rural environment of many of Vermont's small public libraries, the expectation of residents for quality library services is high. Vermont librarians report that their residents are becoming sophisticated users of electronic formats of information and expect to find access to electronic reference databases and OPACs in their public libraries. Though there are still smaller libraries that operate on limited hours and with limited collections, the use of materials borrowed in bulk from regional libraries to augment those local collections is appreciated by residents. Regardless of how small and how few hours the local public library operates, residents still view it as a critical central hub of their community. The challenge remains in many of the smaller rural public libraries to continue to move service ahead amid high turnover and low tax support. Continue support through DOL and LSTA is essential while libraries work with local trustees and town governments to support additional funding.

Vermont librarians commented about the increased access in their library and a growing awareness from their residents about their future needs. Stated one Vermont librarian:

> *"The combination of the DOL/LSTA funded Internet Connectivity Grant and the Gates Grant allowed us to set up four Internet connected PCs. Three years to assume the full cost of the connection has meant a lot to us. We were not even sure we needed four PCs and now we have lines of people waiting to use them. We're going to try and get two more."*
>
> Brandon Free Library

The Vermont Certification Program and the accompanying workshops and training are critical to the ongoing delivery of library services to all Vermonters. In combination with the Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries, the library community in Vermont has a clearly described benchmark for all public libraries to follow in the state. Though both are considered voluntary by the state legislature, it remains important to persist with these two benchmarks in order to reach the Department of Libraries' goals. Interviewees in the evaluation process explained their dependence on both of these programs to help them in their day-to-day library work, as well as in their relations with their trustees and

local governments. Though remaining flexible in application, both benchmarks should continue to play a central role in all that Vermont libraries do in the next five years.

Training and retention of qualified librarians, library staff and trustees will continue to impact the future of library and information services in Vermont. An expansion of the Certification program with a shorter completion time and increased offering of courses both online and in classes will benefit the library community. The DOL should continue to maintain the Minimum Standards and look to strengthen it, or "raise the bar" every time current standards become fulfilled by a majority of the public libraries in the state.

An important lesson is that the strategy the DOL has devised in its Five Year Plan is working and working well. Revisions made during the implementation of the plan served to respond to changing conditions in technology and to feedback from libraries throughout the state. LSTA funds are critically important to maintain the standards through their use in projects that lead the library community to adopt new technologies and library services that are delivered through shared resources and linkages to other libraries in the state. The DOL through its use of LSTA funding has created a powerful momentum in which local communities desire to join in resource sharing efforts such as VALS and the VUC. Public Library Support Services such as the consulting services to local libraries, children's and school services such as the DOL/DOE children's material review sessions, statewide summer reading program, regional library collections, training and continuing education, and reference and ILL services, including the University of Vermont Access Office, are all labor-intensive activities and are dependant on LSTA assistance.

Brief review of evaluation process

The Vermont Department of Libraries has used LSTA funds to improve library services to many rural residents of Vermont. The evaluation process was charged with evaluating the achievements that were accomplished toward meeting the goals of the five-year plan.

In the fall of 2001, The Vermont Department of Libraries, through the Chief Officers of State Libraries in the Northeast (COSLINE) contracted with Library Development Solutions (LDS), a library consulting firm in Princeton Junction, New Jersey to assist in the evaluation of its five year LSTA plan.

Evaluation criteria to view the overall success of LSTA funding toward these goals included:

- Awareness by libraries and citizens about benefits received from LSTA funding.
- Increases in electronic resource usage by libraries.
- The reach or population served, by various LSTA funded projects.
- The perception by the library community of LSTA funded initiatives
- What value added benefits or services have been realized by libraries in Vermont.
- Level of multi type cooperation or resource sharing.

Library Development Solutions used a variety of methods to collect and analyze information concerning Vermont's achievements. These included a review of Vermont's original Five-Year LSTA plan and a revision in 1999-2000, as well as annual reports to IMLS and supporting documents. After identifying the projects that would receive closer analysis, Library Development Solutions scheduled visits to Vermont to meet with DOL staff and public librarians to discuss the plan's components and to develop an understanding of the overall impact that LSTA funding has had on Vermont's libraries. Interviews and discussions were held with staff from Public Libraries Support Services including Children's Services, Consulting Services and Resource Sharing. Interviews were also held with Division Directors, Library and Information Services, the DOL/UVM interlibrary loan and reference facilitator, staff from VALS, Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, and with public library staff from the Aldrich Public Library in Barre, the Waterbury Public Library and the Midstate Regional Library in Berlin as well as a local elementary school librarian from Montpelier.

Subsequent telephone interviews were conducted with public library directors from Rutland and Brandon and with two LBPH users.

Conclusion

LSTA funds in Vermont are being used "...to provide adequate library materials and information services in all established formats to all Vermonters regardless of age, location, education, economic status or special need," benefiting all residents of Vermont. LSTA funds are a critical component of reaching the goals that the Vermont DOL and the IMLS have targeted. The Vermont DOL has made the interdependence of libraries in Vermont a compelling story of leading over 600 libraries of all types and especially 200 mostly rural local public libraries to a shared vision of "...providing every Vermonter with equitable access to library materials and worldwide information at the local level and for all 200 public libraries to provide adequate services to their local residents." This could not be done without LSTA assistance.

Library and information services in Vermont have improved through the administration of LSTA funded programs by the Vermont Department of Libraries, as reported by DOL staff, local public librarians and residents. Residents have gained increased access to print, non-print and electronic resources in many areas of the state through VALS and interlibrary loan, and especially through the services of the regional libraries which handled over 36,000 requests in 2000 and provide a large number of the local training and development programs for public libraries. Vermont's statewide summer reading program, the extensive and flexible consulting services (which can adapt to and assist libraries with new programs such as "e-rate"), the certification program for public librarians, the Vermont Automated Libraries System and the use of a tiered approach to technology grants for local public libraries are some examples of the shared vision of interdependence among Vermont libraries. The record number of public libraries in 2001 meeting the Minimum Standards for Vermont Public Libraries and the large group of librarians receiving certification are strong indicators of the success that the Vermont

DOL has had with LSTA assistance. Future investment in automation resources for local libraries (especially smaller rural ones), examining the benefits of the combined library structure and a limited county-wide consortia (such as in Chittenden County) that have been discussed and modeled, and continued consulting with local libraries and local trustees are areas topics that should be reviewed for the next five years.

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